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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5970
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0258
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0637
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1740
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7676
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1850
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 002637

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DEPT. FOR EUR AND NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/13/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [IR](#) [UNSC](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: VOLKER DISCUSSES IRAN, LEBANON AND SYRIA WITH
ITALIANS

REF: A. STATE 148157
[B](#). STATE 150032
[C](#). STATE 150777
[D](#). ROME 2489

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Classified By: DCM Anna M. Borg. Reasons 1.4. B and D.

Summary

[1](#)1. (C/NF) On Sept. 13 in Rome, EUR PDAS Volker met PolDir Terzi and other MFA officials, and PM Deputy Diplomatic Advisors Gentilini and Carnelos. Terzi thanked the U.S. for helping get Italy included in the Berlin Iran talks and called the common U.S.-EU position on Iran a major achievement. The Iranians were beginning to sound like Mafiosi in some of their messages. He added that if the EU could remain credible on Iran non-proliferation, it would be more credible as it seeks to engage in the Middle East peace process. Volker praised Italy's leadership on Lebanon and stressed the importance of not giving Syria the impression that Damascus had a role to play in Lebanon. Terzi said Italy had to talk with Syria because of the Italian presence in UNIFIL, but would not give Syria undeserved credibility. He stressed the importance of training the Lebanese armed forces and saw this as a potential role for NATO. Gentilini added that Italy's message to the SARG was that it had lost Lebanon and acknowledging that fact was key to ending Syria's isolation. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) On Sept. 13, EUR PDAS Kurt Volker accompanied by PolMil Counselor met Italian MFA Political Director Giulio Terzi, his deputy Giacomo Sanfelice, Director General for the Americas Claudio Bisogniero and NATO Office Director Gianni Bardini for a wide-ranging discussion of the bilateral agenda. Volker, accompanied by DCM and PolOff, also met later that day with PM Deputy Diplomatic Advisors Fernando Gentilini and Marco Carnelos. Iran, Syria and Lebanon discussions are reported in this message. Discussion of NATO Summit preparations, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairman-in-Office bid and Venezuela's UNSC candidacy will be reported SEPTEL.

Iran: Italy Grateful for Inclusion at Berlin

¶3. (C/NF) Terzi thanked the U.S. for helping to find a formula for including Italy in the recent Iran talks in Berlin. Volker asked if the structure of the Berlin meetings had worked well. Terzi said it had in practical terms, as it solved the problem of finding a formula for Italian inclusion. Volker continued that the U.S. had been trying to help Italy with this, and that the Secretary and U/S Burns had raised the matter with their counterparts. "We think having you in the discussions is a good idea." Terzi reported that Italy remained disappointed that there had not been a breakthrough for Italian inclusion in the EU-3, over concerns that if Italy were included there would be problems with China and Japan. He noted that Italy was not giving up on getting more directly involved in the talks, given the substantive issues at stake, and the question of Italy's standing within the EU.

¶4. (C/NF) Terzi said that FM D'Alema supported preparing for a UNSCR, while at the same time pressing Iran to comply and keeping an emphasis on the negotiating track. Prodi's Sept. 7 meeting with Larijani had been less negative than the Italians had expected (see ref d), and Terzi believed the EU would remain cohesive at the Sept. 15 GAERC. He said it had been a major achievement to get the EU and the U.S. on the same wavelength concerning Iran, and that the common position should not be watered down. As a next step, Volker told the Italians that we need motion in the UNSC or progress will be eroded, and added that the U.S. believed we would ultimately have Russian support in the UNSC. Terzi had gotten the same sense in Berlin, and felt the Russians were ready. However, the Russians, he said, believe that activity at Busheir is

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not sanctionable, and, he added wryly, they also hope their arms sales to Iran will fall outside of any sanctions regime.

Terzi said he had asked D'Alema to give instructions on whether Italy could support moving on financial controls for proliferators like Iran, and added that personally, Terzi believed that made sense. He then said that if the EU could remain credible on the Iran non-proliferation issue, it would be more credible as it seeks to engage in the next phases of the Middle East peace process after Lebanon. He said the focus was already shifting to Israeli-Palestinian issues as Abu Mazen and Hamas work out a common platform and appoint new ministers.

EU Role in Tandem w/Strong U.S. Ties Is Fundamental

¶5. (C/NF) LEBANON/SYRIA: Volker said the U.S., including the Secretary, had been impressed with the leadership role Italy

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played on Lebanon both in the diplomacy and on contributing ground forces. Bisogniero replied that the path of cooperation embarked on by the Secretary and FM D'Alema in June in Washington had continued and been enhanced by the Lebanon crisis and the Rome conference. Italy had proved that it could play an important role in the EU while maintaining its strong links with the U.S. This was the fundamental basis of Italian foreign policy. Italy, he said, was grateful for America's appreciation. Terzi added that our constant consultations had achieved excellent results. Volker focused on implementation of UNSCR 1701, noting that if care was not taken, Hezbollah would try to rearm and put us all back where the conflict began. The U.S. remains skeptical of Syria's role and worries that Damascus is feeling diplomatically empowered due to recent visits and invitations. We don't want Syria to believe they can have a role in Lebanon. The U.S., he continued, was aware that

Italy must have some contact with Syria because of its troops in UNIFIL, but, he urged, this should not be high-level and Italy should not suggest to Syria that they have a role to play in Lebanon.

¶16. (C/NF) Terzi responded that FM D'Alema had been clear with the Syrians that their bad behavior was unacceptable and that absent a change they would remain isolated. The Italian conversations with Syria had, he said, been tough and did not leave the Syrians thinking they had gained credibility. Italy had, he reported, been trying to get its EU partners to support deployment of a civilian EU technical mission to the Syrian side of the Syrian border to "assist" (but really to monitor) the Syrians along the border with Lebanon. However, the French had strong reservations. Terzi stressed that Italy's post-1701 contacts with Syria were aimed at fixing a porous border, not at giving undeserved credibility to Syria. When Volker asked if there was the will in the EU to fix the border from the Lebanese side using UNIFIL, Terzi replied that he would know more on Friday after the GAERC, but he expected there to be French reservation on this as well.

Terzi: Iranians Sounding Like Mafiosi

¶17. (C/NF) Terzi said that UNIFIL was coming together well, and cited excellent help from the U.S. in defining the strategy cell in New York. The French were pleased to see a professional commander in charge of the operation there. Terzi said the deal reached with the UN Administration concerning the cell was better than Italy had expected. Bisogniero cautioned that these are relatively easy times, and that when things in Lebanon get more difficult, Italy will need our close consultation and support. Terzi added that Iran was already passing messages that almost sounded like they came from Mafiosi. Finally, Terzi noted that Italy was interested in an eventual NATO contribution in Lebanon, but that it would be very sensitive and could generate unpleasant reactions from some of the regional states. However, he said, there are areas (maritime control, intelligence, maybe airspace control) where NATO could play a role. But the one he thought had most promise was NATO

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training for the Lebanese army, if the Lebanese government requests it. Volker told him that the US would be open to and flexible about a NATO role in Lebanon, and suggested it could be done via a clearing house or trust fund. Any NATO military contribution would probably have to be done as a contribution to the UN/blue helmet mission. We're not trying to have NATO take over from the UN.

¶18. (C/NF) Gentilini's message was similar to the MFA's, noting that Italy was pleased to be part of the solution in Lebanon and there appeared to be strong political will in Italy to continue to play a role. Gentilini noted that the GOI was being extremely cautious with the Syrians, and viewed their compliance with UNSCR 1701 as a test. The international community needed to encourage the SARG to understand that Syria had lost Lebanon. Carnelos compared the situation to the Balkans, where Serbia needed to accept the loss of Kosovo before moving on. Gentilini added that Italy insisted that the SARG could not end its isolation until it recognized this fact. Gentilini speculated that this could be easier than imagined. MFA DG for the Middle East Sessa's recent trip to the region revealed that Hezbollah had been severely weakened by the conflict. Carnelos added that Nasrallah's comment that Hezbollah would not have embarked on their course of destruction had the consequences been clear indicated to the Italians that Hezbollah was essentially admitting that they had been compelled to attack Israel on Tehran's orders. Finally, he noted that in Italy's view, re-launching the peace process was absolutely critical to ultimate success in the region.

19. (U) PDAS Volker has cleared this message.
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